United Nations S/PV.5344

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5344th meeting

Friday, 13 January 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Mahiga	(United Republic of Tanzania)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Congo	Mr. Ikouebe
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. Duclos
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Kitaoka
	Peru	Mr. De Rivero
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Denisov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Wolff

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan (S/2005/821)

Monthly report of the Secretary-General on Darfur (S/2005/825)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-20671 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan (S/2005/821)

Monthly report of the Secretary-General on Darfur (S/2005/825)

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jan Pronk, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and Head of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Pronk to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Salim A. Salim, Special Envoy of the African Union for the Inter-Sudanese Peace Talks on the Conflict in Darfur.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Salim to take a seat at the Council table.

I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, at this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the monthly report of the Secretary-General on Darfur, document S/2005/825. Members also have the report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan, document S/2005/821.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Jan Pronk, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and Head of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan, and by Mr. Salim A. Salim, Special Envoy of the African Union for the Inter-Sudanese Peace Talks on the Conflict in Darfur.

I give the floor to Mr. Pronk.

Mr. Pronk: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having given me this opportunity to brief the Council on the current situation in the Sudan, including in Darfur.

One year after its signing in Nairobi, on 9 January 2005, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) stands firm. Its implementation, although slow, remains on track and is moving forward. The tragic death of John Garang, the leader of the south, less than a month after he had been sworn in as the new Vice-President of the Sudan, was a major blow. It caused consternation and delays, but neither party has found a reason to deviate from the Agreement, which was his legacy. On the contrary, parties realize that they depend on each other and that they have to move forward.

In the space of one year two new constitutions have been adopted — one for the Sudan as a whole and one for southern Sudan. Two new Governments had been formed. All of the institutions that had to be established on the basis of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement have been established. Some have hardly met, while others are facing political disputes. However, the spirit of the Agreement stands tall. The redeployment of the Sudanese army away from the south has started. The target of 30 per cent redeployment within one year has more or less been accomplished. The United Nations has instructed the forces on both sides to provide notification of all movements seven days in advance, and so far there have been only minor violations of those instructions.

As a matter of fact, the Joint Ceasefire Committee — the only United Nations-led institution — has been the most successful Agreement institution. It started convening shortly after the Security Council adopted resolution 1590 (2005) in March last year mandating the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) to monitor the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. It has met 15 times and has been able to reach consensus on most issues regarding the

interpretation and implementation of the ceasefire paragraphs in the Agreement. The talks between the SPLM and the other armed groups in southern Sudan are proceeding very well. That could pave the way for the integration of all combatants, either into one of the armies or into civil society.

Of course, a lot still needs to be done. The peace process must become more inclusive, incorporating other political parties and civil society. The security laws must be brought into line with the constitution. The disarmament, demobilization and consequent reintegration of the combatants is yet to commence. The return of displaced persons and refugees has started, but we lack the resources to support the return. The rehabilitation and development of agriculture in the south, of its economy, its towns and its villages, including water, education and health systems, has yet to start.

The capacity of the new Government of Southern Sudan is still limited. Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, return, rehabilitation and capacity-building all require more international financial support. Without such support, the expectations of the people in the south will not be met. That is a major risk.

There is peace, indeed. Where is the peace dividend? Conflicts emerge out of tribal disputes and also with people returning to their villages. UNMIS, through timely reaction in an integrated fashion, has been able to defuse some of those conflicts with the cooperation of the authorities. However, there will be more conflicts. We have such concerns in Abyei, one of the transition areas, where the Missiriya and the Dinka on the ground have learned to live together but where uncertainty about the future status of the region continues to pose a threat. In the east, close to the Eritrean border, a confrontation may arise as soon as the SPLM withdraws to the south, as it has committed itself to do under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

The Government and the eastern rebel movements had agreed to start discussions leading to peace talks facilitated by the United Nations in the third quarter of last year, but thereafter the United Nations was sidelined. The parties agreed to Libya as a facilitator, but talks have yet to start — even though the redeployment deadline of 9 January 2006 has passed. This is creating a void with the potential for new armed conflict, violating the gentlemen's agreement between the parties, facilitated by the United Nations in the middle of last year, not to attack each other.

Finally, the attacks of the Uganda-based Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) on civilians and humanitarian workers in the south are paralysing our activities in a considerable part of the south. The situation there directly threatens the potential peace dividends.

The sense of optimism among the people of the south is therefore low. They have also become suspicious. Many are losing their belief in the north's sincerity regarding giving the south a chance to develop beyond peace. The parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement have agreed that 50 per cent of oil revenues and the resulting income would accrue to the south. However, there is no transparency. The Khartoum authorities have been reluctant to provide answers to all questions regarding oil. People in the south are becoming less and less confident that the Agreement's essential element on the sharing of wealth will become a reality.

The international community and its institutions — including all countries investing in and buying from the Sudan, along with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) exerting its mandate to assess economic and financial governance — have a political and an economic interest in the full and fair implementation of that agreement on oil. The upcoming meeting in March of the Sudan Consortium, to be led by the World Bank, will be a good opportunity to discuss that, in order to settle the matter and to avoid having possible differences of opinion lead to a real dispute.

Matching the cynicism in the south, there are suspicions in the north that the SPLM does not really want to give unity a chance in the referendum to be held six years after the conclusion of the Peace Agreement. Making unity the attractive option is part of the mandate that the Security Council has given to the Mission. We are trying to do that by focusing in particular on poverty reduction and on sustaining peace, minority rights, human rights and constitutional rights. In the referendum, people will be free to decide either for unity or separation. If, six years after the conclusion of the Peace Agreement people are less poor, have more rights and live in peace throughout the country in a still-united Sudan, they may consider it

attractive to stay together as one nation, albeit with two systems.

The SPLM leadership would be wise to show that they have not decided otherwise, that is, to opt for separation whatever the developments in the next five years. The unity option should get a real chance when people exercise their right to vote in the referendum. However, the Government in the north should do everything to make that attractive. It can do so by guaranteeing a fair share of power, resources and income to the people of the south for expenditure and investment in water, infrastructure, schools, jobs, agriculture, housing and health care for all the people who for decades were deprived of such things.

Unequal distribution of power and wealth was also one of the causes of the war in Darfur. There is not yet peace in Darfur. Peace is indivisible. The continuing violence, killing, rape and human rights violations are not only a tragedy for the people of Darfur, they also violate the requirements set out in resolutions of the Security Council. Moreover, they are a threat to the sustainability of peace in the south.

The deadline set at Abuja to reach a peace agreement on the matter of Darfur before the end of 2005 was not met. The parties have failed. The passing of the 31 December deadline was ignored and went unnoticed. One cannot avoid the impression that the parties have lost all sense of urgency and do not really care about deadlines. They talk but do not achieve results. Chairman Salim did everything he could to get the parties to end the talks with an agreement, but the parties shied away.

One wonders whether negotiators really care about the fate of the 3 million war-affected people, more than 2 million of whom live in camps for displaced persons and refugees. Thanks to international assistance and the commitment of humanitarian workers on the ground — who deserve our admiration — malnutrition and mortality figures have decreased considerably. However, that decrease cannot be sustained in an environment of insecurity, which results in less and less access for humanitarian assistance.

All of us will have to reconsider the strategy for achieving peace in Darfur. The parties, having missed the 31 December deadline, will now have to commit themselves to reaching an agreement during this, the seventh, round of talks. At the beginning of the seventh round they pledged that it would be the last and that it would end before 31 December 2005. The least they can do now is to stop the clock. The parties should not adjourn for an eighth round, but should instead conclude an agreement for the sake of the people they claim to represent.

Parties negotiating in Darfur could learn from the way by which the north-south Peace Agreement was reached in Nairobi. Before everything else in Nairobi, a sustained and lasting ceasefire was agreed upon. In southern Sudan the fire ceased, not only on paper but also on the ground. That made it possible to continue negotiations for a fair distribution of power and wealth, which is the core of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

The same thing should also happen in Darfur. Only when the fighting has stopped will the parties, together with others who did not take up arms but who have a real stake in the development of their part of the Sudan — tribal leaders, civil society, representatives of displaced people, intellectuals and others — be able to reach a fair, inclusive and sustainable agreement on governance, power, wealth, land, water and economic development. Those who did not take up arms and have watched the parties failing in Abuja should be given the right to participate in a meaningful Darfur-Darfur dialogue, which should begin soon.

Any agreement, whether in Abuja or in El Fasher, will be sustainable only if the international community assists in guaranteeing security. The African Union has done an admirable job, but the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) has not been provided with adequate resources and adequate means to prevent attacks. We deplore the death of young African soldiers who went to Darfur to help save the lives of innocent civilians but who became targets themselves.

The security situation in Darfur is chaotic. The perpetrators of the 2003 and 2004 violence have attained their goal: many areas have been cleansed. They have free passage in the countryside. Millions of villagers sitting in camps are too afraid to leave. Terror continues. At least once a month groups of 500 to 1,000 militia, on camels and on horseback, attack villages, killing dozens of people and terrorizing others, who flee.

Since I gave my last briefing to the Council, the villages Aro Sharow, Tama and Abu Sorouj should be added to Tawila, Labado, Hamada and Khor Abache —

all of which have witnessed cruel atrocities, terror, killing and rape. It is no wonder that internally displaced persons and refugees do not dare to return. They do not trust anybody anymore. Only international guarantees such as those provided by the African Union can help.

The force which is necessary to provide such guarantees should be big — much bigger than the present one. It should not be on call but in place, present everywhere where people may be attacked. It should be strong, able to defend itself, able to deter attacks on civilians and able to disarm militias and the Janjaweed, which should have been disarmed by the Government in the first place. That has not been done, despite demands laid down in Security Council resolutions. The force should stay long enough to provide confidence — at least three to four years after the reaching of a peace agreement. Its financing should be guaranteed all along. It should have a broad mandate — broad enough to deter non-compliance. It should be an integral element of a unified approach towards Darfur, with humanitarian, political, police, legal, human rights, reconstruction and economic development instruments. It should be supported by sanctions — sanctions on troop movements which are not in accordance with the agreement; sanctions on arms deliveries; and sanctions against those who have caused atrocities, and in particular those who have instructed others to do so — not only foot soldiers, but commanders and those political leaders who were responsible for the carnage of 2003 and 2004 and who refuse to stop the atrocities of 2005.

Many people have paid lip service to the need for peace. Looking back at three years of killing and cleansing in Darfur, we must admit that our peace strategy so far has failed. All we did was pick up the pieces and muddle through, doing too little too late. The ultimate responsibility lies with the perpetrators, but we should do more to stop them, to end impunity and to offer prospects to the children of Darfur that they can live without fear.

We hoped that there would be peace at the end of the year. Did we do more than just hope? Hope is a good thing, but it has its limits.

The President: I thank Mr. Pronk for his presentation.

I now call on Mr. Salim.

Mr. Salim: I wish at the outset to express appreciation to Mr. Augustine Mahiga, Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania and President of the Security Council for the month of January, for the invitation that was extended to me to brief the Council on the ongoing negotiations in Abuja, Nigeria, to end the conflict in Darfur.

It is good to be back in New York and in this Council Chamber. As I have gone down memory lane, I cannot help reminiscing about the time, 30 years to the month this January, when, as Permanent Representative of my country to the United Nations, I was privileged to preside over the deliberations of the Security Council. The coincidence and symbolism of being in New York when a distinguished and worthy compatriot is presiding over the Council can only make me hope that those fortuitous circumstances will lead to successful deliberations by this body.

Let me preface my briefing to the Council on the status of the Darfur peace talks by underscoring the unparalleled commitment of the African Union (AU) to the attainment of lasting peace in Darfur through a negotiated settlement. Indeed, I do not recollect any other time — be it in the history of the erstwhile Organization of African Unity or in that of the African Union — when a deployment of the magnitude of that which the AU has launched in Darfur has ever taken place under the aegis of the continental organization. Many of us accepted the calls to join in facilitating the process out of our honest conviction that Africans had not only to take the lead, with the full and active support of the international community, to put an end to the senseless killings in Darfur, but also to address the abuses which had become an indictment of our collective conscience as Africans, especially after things went dramatically wrong in Darfur.

Darfur therefore represents an exemplary and new case of the African Union's taking the lead as a regional organization to tackle a complex humanitarian emergency. The African response to the tragedy unfolding before us in Darfur also symbolizes our collective determination to respond effectively, as against assuming an attitude of indifference to problems in Africa. Such a response is totally consistent with the letter and spirit of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, which makes it hardly surprising to see the overwhelming support of Africans and the wider international community in Abuja and Darfur itself. Let me therefore express appreciation for

the strong support that this Council and the international community at large have extended to those African initiatives.

We are now in the seventh round of the talks. I began my current role during the fifth round in June last year. At the end of that round, a declaration of principles to end the conflict in Darfur was adopted. That significant development paved the way for the commencement of negotiations on the substantive issues that had been identified by the mediation. It was therefore our collective hope, after that round in July 2005, that when the sixth round was convened in September 2005, progress would be made on the issues of power-sharing, wealth-sharing and security arrangements. That expectation was not realized, as the talks could not cover much ground on account of the deep division in the armed opposition — the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) — where the threat of fragmentation was more serious.

The seventh round of talks has been in continuous session in Abuja since 28 November 2005, arising from the stated commitment of the parties to make that round a decisive and final one. Apart from short breaks to celebrate Christmas and Eid El-Hajj, we intend to ensure that the parties are continuously engaged until a comprehensive agreement is reached on all the major issues that separate the parties.

Prior to the convening of the seventh round, concerted efforts were deployed to resolve procedural issues that were impacting negatively on the progress of the talks. Those problems included, in particular, the division of the armed movements, especially that within the SLM/A. Internal leadership divisions have, of course, created their own complications. I am happy to note that, following initiatives spearheaded by the AU, the United States of America, Chad, Libya, Eritrea and the United Nations, the problem has been contained, at least for the time being. Consequently, the SLM/A has been able to participate in the negotiations during the current round as one movement, with emerging joint positions, along with the Justice and Equality Movement, on many of the issues under the agenda of the negotiations.

We remain appreciative of all those who were directly and indirectly involved in that and other constructive initiatives. The net effect has been that, even though that arrangement has led to some tension for a single delegation, the task of the mediation was greatly expedited, as negotiations began in earnest in all three commissions, namely on power-sharing, wealth-sharing and security arrangements. The absence of total unity among the ranks of the movements has resulted, in some cases, in the hardliners' holding the process hostage, and the results have therefore been very mixed.

As concerns the wealth-sharing commission, substantial progress has been made in the consideration of its agenda. The negotiations are being conducted in a professional and serene atmosphere. The parties are demonstrating a high degree of cooperation, both among themselves and with the mediation. The discussions were facilitated by the fact that most of the representatives are highly qualified professionals in the relevant technical fields. So far, the commission has considered eight out of the 10 items on its agenda, and agreements have been reached on about 90 per cent of the issues.

Unfortunately, the level of progress in the two other commissions — those on power-sharing and on security arrangements — has remained frustratingly low, and the discussions extremely difficult.

In the power-sharing commission, the gap between the positions of the parties remains wide and their views extremely divergent, especially on the following issues.

First, with respect to the status of Darfur, the issue is whether it should become a region now, as demanded by the movements, or whether it should retain the status quo of three states and facilitate a process whereby the people of Darfur can decide whether they want a region through a referendum or another consultation mechanism, as articulated by the Government. While the movements and the Government both accept the notion of a referendum, the difference lies in the fact that the movements want a referendum after the establishment of a region, while the Government's position is that a referendum should be held to decide whether a region should be established.

Other issues include the demand by the movements for the post of Second Vice-President; their demand that Darfurians control the capital city of Khartoum, given that there is a significant population of Darfurians in the city; and their demand to return to the Darfur border of 1 January 1956.

The other power-sharing issues that remain unresolved include power-sharing at the national level during the interim period. This involves the question of executive, legislative and judiciary appointments, as well as representation of the movements in the civil service, the military, police and security forces, and transitional institutions such as the electoral commission, the census board and the implementation commissions established under the Naivasha Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

In the security arrangements commission, the negotiations have been more problematic, as expected. Security is at the heart of the problems in Darfur. Apart from the current deterioration of the security situation on the ground in Darfur, another set of deep-rooted problems have combined to complicate the discussions on security arrangements.

It has taken the parties more time, over a period of a month, even to agree on a five-point agenda for the negotiations. The delay was due partly to the stated desire of the parties — mainly the movements — to put their detailed positions on the agenda and to negotiate those positions with the mediators. Those problems have been compounded by the current and historical experience of deep mistrust on the part of the movements, arising from their perception of the unwillingness, or inability, of the Government to negotiate in good faith or even to implement the agreements reached. In effect, the movements are negotiating on the basis of their worst fears as against their best hopes. Given such a situation, in order to win the trust of the parties, mediation had to proceed patiently and cautiously. Moreover, the parties are now falling back on the decisions of the Security Council and of the African Union Summit to either articulate or dig in with respect to their positions, losing sight of the fact that those decisions were intended to facilitate the negotiations in the first place, not complicate them.

In the light of the engagements with the parties, the mediation has been able to identify the major issues that will have to be resolved before any realistic security arrangements for Darfur can be agreed upon. These include, but are not exclusively limited to, the following.

First, the existing humanitarian ceasefire must be enhanced. Its agreements are not being fully implemented by the parties, thereby resulting in a serious deterioration of the security situation on the ground in Darfur. Here such issues as disclosure, mapping, assembly and redeployment of forces, creation of a buffer zone for humanitarian assistance, safe supply routes for non-military supplies and the enhancement of the Ceasefire and Joint Commissions would have to be addressed.

Negotiations for a permanent cessation of hostilities and a comprehensive ceasefire agreement would incorporate issues such as the disarmament of the controversial Janjaweed and other tribal militias, as well as the status of forces of both the Government and the movements, and the final security arrangements for Darfur, including, of course, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

Given the foregoing, the assessment of the mediation could be summarized as follows.

The approach of the parties to the negotiations on the substantive issues still leave a lot to be desired. So far, the negotiations have been characterized by an unacceptable level of inflexibility with respect to the positions of the parties; suspicion; the absence of even a minimum level of confidence; and deep distrust. In fact, in many instances, a deliberate policy of stalling by the movements, in the expectation of some dramatic developments in the country and externally, could be detected.

The movements do not appear to view the negotiations as a strategic arena. The battlefield remains the strategic arena, and the negotiations are a tactical arena. This does not mean that the negotiations are unimportant; it means that they are not yet sufficiently important to the movements. At least, that is the way it appears insofar as some of the movements are concerned.

The movements might be waiting for a deal in the power-sharing commission before negotiating in earnest on security arrangements. That would be a logical negotiating posture, since, in general, military force is a means to achieve political objectives, and security is an outcome of political arrangements.

The current estimate of the mediation is that the Darfur process is still some weeks away from a settlement. The parties, both the Government and the armed movements, need to show more flexibility and willingness to compromise if a settlement is to be achieved. Some of the extraordinarily high expectations and demands of the parties, especially the

movements, have to be addressed and reduced to more realistic positions.

The issue and place of the Naivasha Comprehensive Peace Agreement in the Darfur peace process poses a unique challenge. Interestingly, the movements have adopted an eclectic approach to the Agreement. On the one hand, they refuse to accept its validity as a reference for resolving the problems of the Sudan, including the conflict in Darfur. On the other hand, they want to pick and choose those aspects of the Agreement that would accord them the same arrangements as were secured by the southerners, unmindful of the differences between the two situations.

Given the foregoing, it may be desirable to consider the following as the way forward and as a means of providing fresh momentum to the Abuja peace talks, whose pace is disturbingly, agonizingly slow.

First, all possible efforts should be made to ensure the effectiveness of the mechanisms established to implement the Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement, notably the Ceasefire Commission and the Joint Commission. Consideration should be given to reorganizing and revitalizing the commissions, with appropriate and credible sanctions for any parties that persist in violating provisions of the Ceasefire Agreement.

Second, the parties should be left in no doubt that, if their approach to the Abuja talks continues to delay progress towards a settlement, the Security Council will hold them responsible for prolonging the suffering of their people. In such an eventuality, the threat and application of carefully targeted sanctions should be credible and evident and should enjoy the strong support of a united Security Council.

Third, the role of the neighbouring countries — especially Chad, Libya and Eritrea — should be recognized and commended. At the same time, there is a strong need for greater cohesion, transparency and coordination among the regional countries facilitating the peace process and the mediation in order to ensure cohesion, consistency and progress.

Fourth, other external conditions need to be consolidated and accelerated if a peace agreement on Darfur is to be achieved. A particularly urgent concern is the current state of relations and the tension between Chad and the Sudan. Chad's role as a co-mediator in the talks is in the best interest of the process, as evidenced by that country's initiatives and contributions. However, there are reasons to be concerned that an escalation of the crisis in Chad and the crisis between Chad and the Sudan could render any potential political settlement to the conflict in Darfur extremely problematic, especially in the short term.

Fifth, the international partners in the process have continued to play a constructive and positive role in the Abuja negotiations. That should be welcomed, commended and strengthened. However, now more than ever, cohesion and greater coordination between the African Union mediation and the international partners are most desirable as an important component of and a sine qua non for successful negotiations. It is most important for the international partners and the African Union to speak with one concerted voice in their engagements with the parties. As experience gained from other mediation efforts clearly teaches us, whenever the international community speaks with one voice the chances of success are enhanced. On the contrary, when conflicting signals are sent to the parties, the prospects for securing an agreement are made much more difficult. Additionally, the partners need to enhance the level of their representation in Abuja and, wherever possible, facilitate high-profile visits by political leaders to encourage the parties to reach an early agreement.

Sixth, funding for the talks remains extremely precarious. Peace processes are, by nature, expensive undertakings. While the contributions that some countries have made to support the Abuja talks are appreciated, clearly, the current level of funding for the talks needs to be increased substantially to accommodate the extended and final phase and relieve the African Union of a major constraint.

Seventh, as a matter of priority, the African Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) should be strengthened, supported and well funded so that it can carry out its mandate along the lines recommended by the recent joint assessment mission, which undertook a comprehensive review of the deployment of AMIS. In my view it is vital that nothing be allowed to undermine AMIS for the duration of its role in Darfur. That is in the interest of the efforts to end that sad conflict and in the long-term interest of future African Union peace support operations. I realize that a major

constraint with respect to financing is the feeling — quite justifiable on the part of those supporting the operation financially — that there is need for greater burden-sharing. But I believe it is not impossible to find a way to address that concern. That is all the more relevant given the African Union's position of supporting in principle a transition from AMIS to a United Nations operation within the framework of a partnership between the African Union and the United Nations to promote peace, security and stability in Africa.

The African Union and those of us involved in the mediation are actively seeking a negotiated settlement to the Darfur conflict that is just, democratic, sustainable and consistent with the letter and the spirit of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, in particular its most important provisions, which were negotiated to help stabilize the processes of peacebuilding, security, unity, cohesion and good governance throughout the Sudanese nation. Without doubt, those same expectations have also motivated the Council's involvement and decisions, of which we are highly appreciative.

The African Union mediation is confident that a just and lasting settlement of the conflict in Darfur is achievable, but such optimism needs to be guarded, given the action of the parties and some developments in, around and outside Darfur. For that reason, I wish to strongly appeal to the Council to remain actively engaged and to send very strong signals of its support for the Abuja peace process so that a comprehensive agreement can be concluded in the shortest possible time.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to brief consultations before we convene a private meeting.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.